

## Wildlife BA/BE & Specialist Report ~ Peterson Ridge

Project Description: The proposed action would construct three new connector trails totaling about 1.08 miles as part of the Peterson Ridge Trail system south of Sisters, OR.

**Trail 1 - PRT Trailhead Connector Trail:** This is a short multi-use, single track non-motorized connector trail which would link the new Peterson Ridge trailhead and parking lot with the PRT-West and PRT-East trails. About 435 feet of trail would be constructed to Class 3 bicycle trail design standards<sup>1</sup>. No tree removal is anticipated but some brushing is required.

**Trail 2 - Whychus Footbridge to PRT Connector Trail:** This is a short multi-use, single track non-motorized connector trail which would link the eastern end of the Whychus footbridge, located on Forest Road 1605, with the PRT-West trail. About 0.5 miles of trail would be constructed to Class 3 bicycle trail design standards. Warning signs would be placed where the trail crosses Forest Road 16. Some limited tree removal is anticipated (trees less than 6 inches diameter at breast height) and moderate brushing is required.

**Trail 3 - PRT to the Whychus Creek Trailhead Connector Trail:** This is a short single use *hiking only* trail which links the PRT-West trail to the Whychus Creek trailhead. About 0.5 miles of trail would be constructed to Class 2 hiker/pedestrian trail design standards<sup>2</sup>. The trail would provide a hiking loop option from the Whychus Creek trailhead to the Whychus Overlook trailhead, travelling along Whychus Creek. Warning signs would be placed where the trail crosses Forest Road 16. Some limited tree removal is anticipated (trees less than 6 inches diameter at breast height) and significant brushing is required. Bicycle use would be prohibited.

The habitat surrounding the trail connectors is open ponderosa pine forest with bitterbrush understory and thick manzanita shrub along the north facing Peterson ridge. All but 0.1 miles of the proposed trail 2 connector occur within the Scenic View Retention Foreground allocation from the Deschutes LRMP (USFS 1990). The 0.1 miles of the proposed trail 2 connector occurs with the Deer Habitat allocation (USFS 1990).

### I. WILDLIFE

The following tables display those Endangered, Threatened, Proposed, Sensitive, Management Indicator, Survey and Manage, Landbirds, Focal Species for the Eastslope of the Cascades, as well as Birds of Conservation Concern that are known to (or may) occur on the Deschutes National Forest (Tables 1-3). Depending on the specific project, the scope, magnitude and effects this checklist will be considered as documentation for assessment of these species and considered as adequate for a biological assessment, biological evaluation, and wildlife report.

#### Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate species (TEPC)

The current list of threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species (TEPC), as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat that may occur within the Deschutes National Forest. The species list fulfills the requirements of FWS under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

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<sup>1</sup> Class 3 bicycle trail design standards: trail tread would be 18" - 36" wide with a native surface; the clearing width would be 60" - 72".

<sup>2</sup> Class 2 hiker/pedestrian trail design standards: trail tread would be 6" -18" wide with a native surface; the clearing width would be 24" - 48".

# Wildlife BA/BE & Specialist Report ~ Peterson Ridge

**Table 1: Threatened, Endangered, & Proposed Species**

Species/ Critical Habitat	Status	Species or Habitat Present?	Species or Habitat Potentially Affected?	Determination of Effects <sup>1</sup>	Comments	Mitigation Measures
<b>Gray Wolf</b>	Endangered	No	No	<b>NLAA</b>	The project does not occur within occupied wolf range. There is no known wolf activity, an established pack, den site, or rendezvous site on the Deschutes National Forest. The affected area for treatments would be relatively small and disturbance would be localized and temporary (insignificant effect). Although disturbance is possible, the rarity of wolves with no confirmations in the action area in combination with the relevant high human use on existing roads and trails suggests that effects are unlikely (discountable effect). See additional effects/impacts section below for more information.	None
<b>Northern Spotted Owl</b>	Threatened	No	No	<b>NE</b>	Project does not occur within the range of the northern spotted owl.	None
<b>Northern Spotted Owl Critical Habitat</b>	Threatened	No	No	<b>NE</b>	The project does not occur within designated northern spotted owl critical habitat.	None
<b>Oregon Spotted Frog</b>	Threatened	No	No	<b>NE</b>	There are no known Oregon spotted frog sightings on the Sisters Ranger District.	None
<b>Oregon Spotted Frog Critical Habitat</b>	Threatened	No	No	<b>NE</b>	The project does not occur within spotted frog critical habitat.	None
<b>Fisher</b>	Proposed	No	No	<b>NE</b>	The project does not occur within suitable habitat. The project is not within wet mixed conifer with complex horizontal structure.	None
<b>Wolverine</b>	Proposed	No	No	<b>NE</b>	Not within persistent spring snow or high elevation denning. Given its high maneuverability, unlikely to be detoured from the area during implementation.	None
<sup>1</sup> NE - No Effect NLAA - May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect Species or Critical Habitat LAA - May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect Species or Critical Habitat NLJ – Not Likely to Jeopardize the Continued Existence of the Species						

### Sensitive Species

The current list of Sensitive species identified by the Regional Forester as of March 8, 2019. This table distinguishes those species that were previously listed under the Endangered Species Act as Threatened and have since been delisted and added to the Regional Forester's list.

**Table 2: Sensitive Species**

Species	Status	Species or Habitat Present?	Species or Habitat Potentially Affected?	Determination of Effects <sup>1</sup>	Comments
<b>Columbia Spotted Frog</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no slow streams, marshes, ponds, or lake edges that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive, MIS	No	No	<b>NI</b>	No large lakes or rivers suitable for eagle nesting, roosting or foraging habitat present in project area. Nearest site approximately 5k to the east
<b>Bufflehead</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive, MIS	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no lakes that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Greater Sage Grouse</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no sagebrush flats that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Harlequin Duck</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no rapid moving streams that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Horned Grebe</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no lakes with emergent vegetation that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Lewis' Woodpecker</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	Yes	Possible	<b>MIHH</b>	Project within open ponderosa pine forest with large diameter dead/dying trees. Large trees, snags and down wood are not proposed for removal.
<b>Northern Waterthrush</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no dense riparian willows that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Tricolored Blackbird</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no riparian areas with cattails that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Tule Goose</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	Seasonal migrant – spring & fall. There are no wetlands with emergent vegetation that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.

Wildlife BA/BE & Specialist Report ~ Peterson Ridge

Species	Status	Species or Habitat Present?	Species or Habitat Potentially Affected?	Determination of Effects <sup>1</sup>	Comments
<b>Yellow Rail</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There is no marsh habitat proposed for treatment
<b>White-headed woodpecker</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive, MIS	Yes	Possible	<b>MIH</b>	Large trees, snags and down wood are not proposed for removal.
<b>Fringed Myotis</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	Yes	No	<b>NI</b>	No caves, mines, cliffs, rock crevices, old buildings, bridges or snags proposed for treatment.
<b>Pallid Bat</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	Yes	No	<b>NI</b>	No rock outcrops, caves, mines, buildings, bridges, or hollows of live and dead trees proposed for treatment.
<b>Sierra Nevada Red Fox</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	The project is not high elevation so there is no suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Spotted Bat</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	Yes	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no cliffs, caves, or buildings that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Townsend's Big-eared Bat</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive. MIS	Yes	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no caves, mines, bridges, rock crevices buildings, or snags proposed for treatment.
<b>Crater Lake Tightcoil</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive, Survey and Manage	No	No	<b>NI</b>	No perennially wet riparian areas proposed for treatment.
<b>Dalles Hesperian</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	No seeps and springs proposed for treatment.
<b>Dalles Mountainsnail</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	No seeps and springs proposed for treatment.
<b>Shiny Tightcoil</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no aspen stands that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Silver-bordered Fritillary</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no wet meadows, bogs, or marshes with floral resources that would provide suitable habitat within the project area. The species is not known or suspected in the project area.
<b>Morrisoni Bumble Bee</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no areas of abundant floral resources that would provide suitable habitat within the project area.
<b>Suckley Cuckoo Bumble Bee</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no areas of abundant floral resources that would provide suitable habitat within the project area.

# Wildlife BA/BE & Specialist Report ~ Peterson Ridge

Species	Status	Species or Habitat Present?	Species or Habitat Potentially Affected?	Determination of Effects <sup>1</sup>	Comments
<b>Western Bumblebee</b>	R6 USFS Sensitive	No	No	<b>NI</b>	There are no areas of abundant floral resources that would provide suitable habitat within the project area.
<sup>1</sup> <b>NI</b> - No Impact <b>MIH</b> - May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Contribute To A Trend Towards Federal Listing Or Loss Of Viability To The Population Or Species <b>WIFV</b> - Will Impact Individuals or Habitat with A Consequence That the Action May Contribute To A Trend Towards Federal Listing Or Cause A Loss Of Viability To The Population Or Species					

## Other Species of Interest

Species that have regulatory or management direction that have been observed or are associated with open ponderosa pine habitat and have not already been considered above are presented in this section. Directives include Deschutes National Forest LRMP Management Indicator Species (MIS), Northwest Forest Plan, Focal Species for the Eastslope of the Cascades, and Birds of Conservation Concern.

**Table 3. Additional Species documented in the area and/or associated with open ponderosa pine forest**

Species	Status	Comments
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	MIS	No large lakes or rivers suitable for eagle nesting, roosting or foraging habitat present in project area. Nearest observation approximately 3.5k to the east.
<b>Northern Goshawk</b>	MIS	Goshawks have been detected in the area. Mature and old-growth forest structure will not be impacted.
<b>Woodpeckers/Cavity Nesters</b>	MIS	No large-diameter trees or snags will be removed.
<b>Mule Deer</b>	MIS	Approximately .1 miles of the proposed trails occur with the Deer Habitat Allocation. In addition, all but 0.3 miles of the proposed trails occurs within biological deer winter range. The proposed trails will reduce core habitat by less than 1 acre. The project may impact mule deer, but would not cause a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status. See additional effects/impacts section below for more information.
<b>Chipping Sparrow</b>	Conservation Strategy for Eastslope of the Cascade Mountains	Ponderosa pine habitat with open understory and regenerating pine forest structure will not be impacted.
<b>Flammulated Owl</b>		The forest structure of late successional mixed conifer with interspersions of grassy openings and dense thickets will not be altered.
<b>Pygmy Nuthatch</b>		The forest structure of open ponderosa pine habitat will not be impacted and no large trees will be removed.
<b>Green-tailed Towhee</b>	Birds of Conservation Concern	The forest structure with open ponderosa pine habitat will not be impacted.

## ADDITIONAL EFFECTS/IMPACTS ANALYSIS:

### Core Habitat Analysis

Core habitat analysis was completed for this project. As supported by the best available science, all roads open to the public and motorized system trails were buffered at 200 meters and maintenance level 1 roads (administrative use only) and non-motorized system trails were buffered at 100 meters. The spaces remaining between disturbance buffers, when considered with other species-specific habitat suitability factors, represent core habitat patches. Core habitat represents a higher quality of habitat as wildlife are most likely to find refuge there. This does not mean areas outside the patch are unsuitable, it simply means there is a higher likelihood of wildlife experiencing human disturbance and other associated impacts outside core habitat patches.

The original proposal was altered to reduce impacts to core habitat. In the original proposal Trail Connector #2 would have removed approximately 5.8 acres of core habitat. After several discussions Trail Connector #2 was moved so it would not impact core habitat.

Trail Connector #3 could not be moved due to the steepness of the trail coming off the hill. Trail #3 will reduce available core habitat with the Peterson Ridge Trail area by 0.7 acres. See Figure 2 showing the location of the reduction of core habitat.

The existing road system as well as the existing Peterson Ridge Trail system continue to reduce the amount of potential core habitat in the area.

### Gray Wolf

The proposed project is not expected to alter the wolf's prey species (deer and elk) use of the project area. The small reduction in core habitat could impact deer, but isn't expected to cause a significant change in habitat quality or deer use of the area. The reduction in core habitat isn't expected to impact elk, as they typically don't use the project area.

At this time there are no known resident wolves, den sites, or rendezvous sites on the Deschutes National Forest. The affected area for treatments would be relatively small and disturbance would be localized (insignificant effect). The project is also not expected to alter the distribution on the wolf's prey base (deer and elk). Although disturbance is possible to dispersing wolves, the rarity of wolves with no confirmations in the action area in combination with the relevant high human use on existing roads and trails within the area suggests that effects are unlikely (discountable effect). Therefore, the Peterson Ridge Trail project **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect wolves or their habitat**.

### Mule Deer

The original proposal was altered to reduce impacts to deer. In the original proposal Trail Connector #2 would have removed approximately 5.8 acres of core habitat. After several discussions Trail Connector #2 was moved so it would not impact any core habitat. Trail Connector #3 could not be moved due to the steepness of the trail coming off the hill. Trail #3 will reduce available core habitat with the Peterson Ridge Trail area by 0.7 acres. See the map on page 8 showing the location of the reduction of core habitat. While this is a fairly small loss of core, existing roads and trails have reduced available core throughout the Peterson Ridge Trail area. The project **may impact mule deer**, but would not cause a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status.

## Wildlife BA/BE & Specialist Report ~ Peterson Ridge

**MITIGATION MEASURES** – The following mitigation measures would be included to remove or reduce any potential impacts. These measures are non-discretionary and are necessary to achieve the determination of effects:

- 1. Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Wildlife Species Management** – If any threatened, endangered or sensitive species are detected, the FS wildlife biologist will be contacted and proper protection measures would be taken.

### **FOREST PLAN COMPLIANCE:**

Implementation of this project is consistent with applicable wildlife goals as well as wildlife standards/guidelines from Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan and Regional Forester's Amendment #2 (Eastside Screens). This project complies with other direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat. The project complies with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species. This project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and other direction and requirements for the management of wildlife species and habitat. This project complies with other direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat. The project complies with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species. This project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and other direction and requirements for the management of wildlife species and habitat.

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